The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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THE Liverpool Conference drew together the largest representative gathering ever held in connection with the Free Churches of the United Kingdom. Most congregations of note belonging to the Liberal ranks were represented by their Ministers and some of their leading members. All phases of thought had their interpreters. The Conference had no dogmatic basis whatever. Every speaker was quite free to utter his own thoughts, but no man was authorised to speak for the Conference. As a consequence, there was both freedom and unity. Diversity of opinion was combined with unity of action. The gathering was a very happy one, and it is sure to be followed by others of a like character which will prove even more successful.

IT was thought by many this great Conference would interfere with the success of the London Anniversaries. But it was not so. Dr. Freeman Clarke, of Boston, U.S.A., drew a great congregation to hear him preach; and the meetings of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and the Sunday School Association were more than usually successful. A new spirit is dawning among us, and there is evidently a growing determination to work together in harmony and in brotherly love. The few men among us who think it desirable to force a division between the representatives of the new and old school of thinkers, find they are playing a losing game. They cry aloud in a wilderness, and there is no response to their cry. We are resolved upon progress, and we do not mean to be divided.

THE Sunday-School Association meetings, in Lancashire, were, as usual, numerously attended, full of spirit, animated by a high purpose, and eminently successful. Lancashire is the very heart of our Sunday-School work, and a visit there always does good; we were sorry not to be able to send a representative this year, but we have been cheered by the reports of the proceedings. The link of connection between our Society and the Manchester Association has always been intimate and strong.

THE Meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in Belfast, has been larger than usual. The annual fight about Instrumental Music took place amid extraordinary excitement, and by a small majority, in a large house, it was decided that, in Presbyterian worship, the human voice should have no help from Organ or Harmonium. The battle will be fought again, and with a different result. But meantime the subject keeps the members of the Assembly from more dangerous topics; while they are struggling over organs they cannot trouble about creeds. Organs are kept out, but graver doubts are stifled; ignorance so far wins the day, but there is a to-morrow.

BUT progress cannot be stopped. We hear of students and ministers who are unsound in the faith, and who are turning for light beyond the pale of the Confession. It is wonderful what books some of these men are reading, and what methods they take to get them. A day of upheaving is not far off. Organ controversies will then be forgotten, and the battle will be respecting the foundations. The men of the Free faith may thank God and take courage.

THE Non-Subscribing Association and the Remonstrant Synod have concluded their Annual Sessions in Belfast. The meetings have been better than usual, and there were more encouraging signs in some respects than have been witnessed of late years. But both organizations need quickening into a newer life, and will have to shake off some ancient trammels if they are to be suited to the present age.

IT is always interesting to note the signs of the times; one of these is the rapid growth of rational views of religion. Miracles, legends, and supernaturalism are losing their hold upon men's minds, and we hear less of the Kingship and Lordship of Christ, and the authority of the Scriptures, than we used to do. Among liberal Christians all these notions are passing away, but there still linger a few unprogressive minds who use old phrases, and fall back into old habits. There are always some little creeks that get filled, even with an ebbing tide.

A GOOD instance of this was supplied at the meeting of the Non-Subscribing Association, in Belfast, the other day. The retiring President, the Rev. T. H. M. Scott, preached about "The Lord Christ," and after his sermon offered up a prayer, at the conclusion of which he raised his voice, and said "O Lord Christ! bear up our petitions to Thy Father's Throne, and bring back an answer of peace to us." Only occasionally, in our pulpits, do we have prayers addressed to Christ, and we thought such an incident could hardly occur now, but we find the habits and doctrines of orthodoxy still remain, and are dying a lingering death. We simply note this incident as a passing fact, and attach no great importance to it.

BUT when we have prayers addressed to the "Lord Christ," and a desire expressed that we should emphasize the redeeming work done by the blood of Christ, it does not seem difficult to come to the conclusion that a highway is being prepared for a safe passage to orthodoxy.

THE Rev. T. Dunkerley, of Comber, is put into Presbyterian harness at last. He is Moderator of the Remonstrant Synod. A better man could not be chosen. If all Presbyters were as large-minded and catholic as he the wheels of Presbyterianism would go smoothly enough. We hope he will not grow into an ecclesiastic, and think there is not much danger.

HOW are our ministers for this country to be educated? At present most of them answer the question themselves. They go either to Manchester New College, or to the Home Missionary Board. But some of our friends want to manufacture them at home. There is the remnant of a Professorial Fund—got from the Government—which brings in an annual income of a little over £100. There are rumours in the air that a staff of three or four Professors may be appointed; but what will £100 be among so many? And when the Professors are appointed, where are the Students to come from? One speaker said what was wanted was "to educate the young men according to our own ideas!" Is it this and the £100 which are exciting the interest in the Student question? Mr. Nelson's suggestion, of devoting the interest of the fund to providing scholarships for Irish Students in Manchester New College and the Home Missionary Board, was a very wise one. Give the young men a chance of the highest culture, and let them come to their work with a high sense of fitness for it.

THE Non-Subscribing Association have had Theological Professors for many years, and paid them at the rate of £300 a year. It was stated the other day that as the result of twenty years' work, and the payment of £6,000 to Professors in the shape of salaries, besides bursaries to students, there are now *two* ministers officiating in Irish Churches. Surely this is much cry and little wool. The fund has been useful to somebody, no doubt, but not for the education of ministers.

IT is better that English and Irish students should be educated together. The contact of mind is good. The men who sit side by side in the class-rooms will understand one another, and be able to work together efficiently in after life. We must not let clannish and national prejudices mar our unity or impair our usefulness.

THE Non-Subscribing Association has certainly taken one step in advance during the present year. It has held a Temperance Breakfast, and we are informed that its President, Rev. J. A. Crozier, and its Secretary, Rev. A. Gordon, have both become abstainers. We hope a large number of ministers and laymen will, in this respect, follow their example.

BY mistake the name of R. M'Calmont, Esq., was omitted from the list of members of the Sunday School Association Committee in our last number. He is, and long has been, one of the most active Sunday School workers in Ireland, and has done good service on the Committee.

AT the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the Unitarian Society the following Sub-Committees were appointed :—

BOOK AND PUBLISHING COMMITTEE.—J. F. Mulligan, Rev. J. J. Wright, Dr. John Polly, George Fisher, Rev. J. C. Street, J. M. Darbishire.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.—T. M'Clelland, J.P., Dr. M'Caw, J. Mansell Smith, R. M'Calmont, D. C. Hyndman, and the Secretaries.

MR. R. M'CALMONT, F.C.S., attended the London Anniversaries as the representative of the Unitarian Society, and he reported, on his return,

that the meetings were of a hopeful character and were evidently influenced, for good, by the recent Conference in Liverpool. Life generates life, and a good spirit developes ennobling activities.

On Sunday afternoon the children's annual floral service, in connection with the Church of the Second Congregation, Rosemary Street, took place under circumstances that were unusually propitious. The floral service has become a kind of institution of the place, and is looked forward to, not only by the scholars, but by "children of larger growth," with eager anticipation. The idea which gives rise to a periodical feast of flowers is, in itself, a pretty one. There is—what one might be pardoned for admiring—a pagan freshness about it, combined with the purity of a religion that is not pagan. The adorned pulpit, and the festooned and garlanded pillars, with the heavy scent of the beautiful deserters from the garden, seem to call up the days when every grove had its nymph, every fount and stream its naiad, yet the eager young faces, and the solemn service, the undimmed atmosphere, through which rolls no cloud of sacrificial smoke, speak eloquently of a new and bloodless dispensation, under which the knife of the high-priest is no longer the necessary prelude of worship. Sunday's service was in some sort sui generis. The church was beautifully, profusely, and yet tastefully decorated. In the porch were floral trophies and green garlands. Round the interior of the building festoons of moss and green leaves joined pillar with pillar, while pendant from the festoons at regular intervals were miniature gardens. The pulpit was beautifully decked with flowers, the porch-like interstices of the facade being bright with tiny bouquets. Behind the pulpit rose an arch, eighteen feet high, the spandrel of which was composed of rich moss, bearing the words, wrought in white flowers, "God is love." Four green arches spanned the isles, two on each side, and in the recesses of the windows were laid baskets of flowers peeping out from amid couches of soft moss and glossy laurel. The centre of the church, the parterre, was filled with the little flowers of humanity for whose special behoof the service was intended, while the other parts of the edifice were crowded by members of the congregation and visitors. Few, indeed, were they who did not boast in dress or buttonhole some flowers, and as the congregation rose to join in the opening hymn the rich perfume, the varied hues, and the bright costumes of the fairer portion of those present, all lit up by the horizontal rays of the declining sun, made up a picture in strangely fitting accord with the consecration of the service to the edification of the young. The proceedings were simple. First was sung a hymn, "All things bright and beautiful," after which Rev. J. J. Wright, Mountpottinger, read Psalm cxxv, and a portion of the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter xv., giving as he read a brief and perspicuous commentary of the story of the Prodigal Son. Another hymn, a voluntary on the organ, prayer, and then a hymn again, and Rev. J. C. Street rose and delivered an address to the children. He took for his theme the words which shone out in their floral lettering above him, "God is love." He dwelt upon the love of children for their parents, and of fathers and mothers for their children; he spoke of the strength of the love that unites the hearts of men and women, and of that equally strong love that makes the stories of Damon and Phythias, of Nisus and Euryalus, of David and Jonathan, the theme of admiration in all times, the love which draws one strong manly heart in bonds—passing in strength those which are fastened by the love of woman—to another manly nature. And then he showed that all this love was in the world and beautified life, because, and only because, "God is love." After another hymn had been sung, the "Our Father" was chanted by the children to the music of the beautiful organ, and the pastor having pronounced the benediction, the little blossoms of humanity, with their friends, slowly, and, as it seemed, regretfully, went out into the sunshine, the better, one could without presumption hope, for having offered the incense of their prayers to heaven along with the sweet, silent worship of the many-hued flowers.—*Morning News.*

The Report of the Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association has just been published, and is a most interesting document. The Society has existed for ten years, and it is in a most prosperous condition: it has 155 members, and, after paying all expenses, has a balance of £21 11s. 0d. in hands. The Society is well officered, and is admirably worked. Its success has been continuous and gratifying. We hope that its future history may be as satisfactory as its past.

THE Rev. J. Panton Ham is still in doleful mood about the Unitarian community. He sees clearly enough that the old Unitarianism and Arianism are dead, and he is alarmed at the vigorous thinking which is developing itself among us. He thinks we are dying. No doubt his phase of Unitarianism is passing away. Old things pass, and new ones appear. The dogmatists among us are trying to galvanize a dead body, and make it move as if it were alive. It will not do. "Dead, my lords and gentlemen," is the verdict. But the progressive Unitarianism of the age is neither dead nor dying. It lives and grows. There is a greatening future for it. Mr. Ham urges separation. No doubt the dead must be buried. So let it be: "Peace to the quiet dead."

WHOEVER wishes to see what a representative American Unitarian—not of the broadest school—thinks about matters pretaining to religion, let him get the Rev. J. Freeman Clarke's Sermon, preached before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. It may be had at the Depository, for one penny. The breath of freedom can be felt throughout the discourse, and it is evident that whatever the dogmatic opinion of the preacher, he is not afraid of the progressive spirit, but, on the contrary, is ready to give it hearty welcome and trust the future to its keeping.

WE are glad to note the manly and straightforward manner in which the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke has thrown in his lot with the Unitarians. He has proved that he has the courage of his convictions, and set an example which many others would do well to follow.

IT will be gratifying to the friends of the Rev. George Hill, late Librarian of the Queen's College, editor of the "Montgomery Manuscripts," and author of "The MacDonnells of Antrim" and "The Plantation of Ulster," to learn that the Premier of England, in recognition of his literary services, has requested, in the most flattering terms, his acceptance of £200 from the Royal Bounty Fund. The communication, as might be expected, is esteemed by the reverend and learned gentleman as conferring a higher honour, owing to the gracious manner in which it was made than the intrinsic value of the gift, unexpected as it was. We are glad to state that Mr. Hill enjoys good health, and still continues his literary work at his son-in-law's residence, Banbridge. As a matter of fact, the price of his books, which we believe are now out of print, has recently risen in value, and the action of Mr. Gladstone must tend to still further enhance the esteem in which they have ever been justly held.

WE hear, with pleasure, that early in July our Mountpottinger friends are about to hold their Annual Floral Service, at which the Rev. J. J. Wright is to deliver an address. They desire to gather at this service a fund for covering the expense of a Summer trip for the children of the School, and we hope they will succeed in their endeavour.

BY the kindness of Sir Edward Porter Cowan (Mayor of Belfast), the Mountpottinger Children will go this year for their day's holiday to Craigavad. The Saturday for the excursion is not definitely fixed but it will be as late as possible in July, by which time Sir Edward will be able to throw open a mown meadow, near the shore, for the use of the children.

BOOK NOTICES.

What do I live for? A Sermon by JAMES C. STREET.

THIS sermon, preached, as we are informed in a prefatory note, in the ordinary course of pulpit duty, and printed at the request of those who heard it, is not an ordinary one, and deserves a far wider circulation than its present semi-private issue will allow. The discourse, founded on the words "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," aims to answer three questions: *first*, "Has human life any purpose beyond bread-winning?" *Second*, "If there is some purpose, what is it?" and *third*, "Am I keeping that purpose in view?" These are vital questions to the individual, and they have as serious an import for society. Any individual who can answer them satisfactorily is a fellow-citizen with the saints, and any church that can do likewise in its corporate capacity, may be looked upon as taking its new place and work in the world. Our young people especially would do well to give this discourse careful consideration, for it is calculated to strengthen and inspire the mind, in these

times when the worthiness of life is so much questioned; and those who have not yet given up the superstition of supernaturalism would do well to consider it, for it would reveal to them that rationalism has a sunnier side than they ever dreamt of, and that rationalism can interpret, not only the bread of life, but also those spiritual words that poured out of the mouth of God. We gladly welcome this word of interpretation in favour of "a real devotion to mental culture, to moral growth, and to religious development." —T. L.

Recollections of Twenty Sunday Afternoon Addresses, By John Page Hopps.

"The Masses," as they are called, make up a wide and thickening stratum in the population of our cities and towns. It is confessedly one of our present day problems, how to attract these "masses" to our churches, or how to get them to any Religious Service whatever. For, these "masses" of whom we now write are not the coarse, ignorant, drunken or criminal section of society, that stratum which is operated upon by the "Salvation Army" and such like agencies; the "masses" we now think of are more or less decent, intelligent, law-abiding. They are not church or chapel goers. Yet they are neither the "Publicans" nor the "Sinners." Could we follow them on a Sunday we might find them at home reading a newspaper, taking a walk if the day were fine, spending an hour with a neighbour in smoke and chat, or listening to some discussion in field or street, perhaps even occasionally going into some hall or church to hear a somewhat un-Sunday Lecture. But to join in a Religious Service, to belong to any Church, is far from the desires of these increasing numbers of people. Doubtless most of them have passed through some Sunday School, and, for a time, earlier on, were members of various churches, but either dogma or some other cause has driven them from the churches, and now cannot recall them. As a rule these people are not against Religion pure and simple. In some fashion they really practise Religion in their homes and among each other without knowing it. They will have nothing to do with the churches because they think churches can give them no help, and yet how sadly they often feel the need of help amid "daily duty and daily care." Though they have left the churches they have still to live in the world, and the burdens, the weariness, the sorrows, and the sin of life are about them ever. How gladly would they welcome any word of strengthening, of good cheer, of brave uplifting, of "hope," instead of heart-break.

John Page Hopps has succeeded in speaking such a word. With what result? Why that the Temperance Hall in Leicester, the largest building in the town, has been crowded at every Service he has held, by just such "masses" as we are writing of. True, he had other attractions for them. In the first place an earnest company of co-workers went through the various districts allotted to them and invited the people to come, leaving a little hymn book, specially prepared by Mr. Hopps, at each house. Then the building they met in for worship had no sectarian associations, as unfortunately most, if not all, churches have. The Hall was made attractive by the liberal and tasteful use of potted plants and cut flowers each Sunday. Instead of a "kist o' whistles," they had, for music, a Brass Band. The hymns were neither "light" nor "heavy," but bright, fresh, and lively. All these things helped no doubt; and in reading these "Recollections" it should be remembered that Mr. Hopps did not regard the addresses as the main thing in the Service. But we cannot help thinking that it was to a great extent the personality of the man himself that gave tone, life, and effect to these varied accessories.

The book before us contains the twenty addresses which Page Hopps delivered. They were given extemporaneously, "a few lines of notes" were all Mr. Hopps had to speak from, "the audience and inspiration of the hour supplied the rest." This book, therefore, is just what it is entitled: "Recollections.

Not one of the "talks," we could judge, occupied more than ten minutes; the spiritual electricity of any one of them must have been such as to make the hearers long for more. Our space does not now permit us to cull an extract, as indeed we might from any page. We have left ourselves room only to say that these are appetising morsels of mental and spiritual food, served up in such dainty, and yet wholesome form as to catch the eye and heart of the most careless. Whoso buys and reads this little book will gain help for his own soul and perchance many suggestions as to his own career and work. It is published at Sixpence, and may be had at the Depository for Fivepence.

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